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ABSTRACT

The National Council on Vocational Education believes that the new Vocational Education Act should focus on the development of the human capital that is essential to any efforts to revitalize our nation's productivity. This will require program improvement for training and retraining in new high-technology occupations, access to programs by disadvantaged and other persons who need skill training to qualify for unsubsidized jobs, and collaborative ventures among vocational education, other education and training programs, and the private sector. Reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act should concentrate on six areas: (1) areas of high unemployment; (2) emerging occupations in high demand areas; (3) economic development and training; (4) handicapped; (5) defense needs; and (6) correctional education. National and state occupational information coordinating committees and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education should be continued. It is also recommended that more flexibility in funding and regulations be established; that fund distribution should combat past inequities; that incentive funds should encourage innovative linkages between vocational education and other education and training programs; that sex equity should receive continuing emphasis; and that national, state, and local advisory councils should be mandated and their independence strengthened. (KC)

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NACVE

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

POLICY STATEMENT

ON

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT

OCTOBER, 1981

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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CE 030 154

NACVE

October 7, 1981

TO THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, AND CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Over the course of the coming year, the Administration and Congress will consider the reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act. The decisions that are made will have a profound influence on the shape of vocational education for years to come.

I am pleased to submit, on behalf of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, its policy statement on reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act.

Vocational education impacts directly on many vital national concerns. The Council believes that the new act should focus on the development of the human capital which is essential to any efforts to revitalize our Nation's productivity. This will require program improvement for training and re-training in new high-technology occupations, access to programs by disadvantaged and other persons who need skill training to qualify for unsubsidized jobs, and collaborative ventures between vocational education, other education and training programs, and the private sector.

The Council looks forward to participating fully as the reauthorization process develops, and trusts that this policy statement will make a positive contribution to the discussion of the issues involved.

Sincerely,

Carol S. Gibson
Chairperson

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PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT

As the process of reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act begins, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education is concerned that the Federal role be clearly defined in order that the most effective use of Federal dollars can be realized. For over a year, the National Council has discussed and examined the nature and importance of Federal support to vocational education. As a lay council, representing the consumers of vocational education, we are convinced that continued Federal support is essential to achieve improvements in vocational education and to make the system more responsive to the rapidly changing requirements of our economy.

Our Nation's productivity and economic health are of utmost concern to all citizens. At a time of shrinking Federal expenditures for domestic programs, we are convinced that Federal support for vocational education should be increased, not decreased, but that its focus be changed. The quality of our workforce is at stake. All efforts to revitalize our economy will fail if we do not also make the investment in human resources which will guarantee the skilled labor force necessary for the new technological age.

The following statement of NACVE concerns and recommendations reflects the change of focus which the Council believes is necessary to make the limited Federal share of the vocational education enterprise more effective.

The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education believes that the Vocational Education Act should be revised to reflect the needs and realities of the 1980's and '90's -- the need for economic development and a workforce educated, trained, or retrained for critically short technical skills; the need to make our education system more relevant to the needs of all citizens, including disadvantaged and handicapped persons; increased concern for our National defense capabilities; and recognition of the greatly increased role and effectiveness of post-secondary institutions in the field of vocational and technical education.

Federal involvement should be framed within the broad context of economic revitalization and increased productivity, to explore the impact which creative use of Federal vocational education dollars might have in making programs more responsive to the needs of target populations and the demands of changing technology.

We recognize that education in America is primarily a state and local enterprise. There is, however, a Federal partnership role to be played in many aspects of education, particularly vocational education. Vocational education is expensive, complex, and changing. It touches very directly on many vital National concerns. In addressing those concerns we urge that the administration and funding of vocational education remain under the aegis of the U.S. Department of Education or its successor agency, where there is an understanding and appreciation of the educational value of the program, and of the operation of the education system at the state and local level where the programs are delivered.

FINDINGS

The new Vocational Education Act should provide a respite from cumbersome Federal requirements and regulations and permit local and state jurisdictions greater flexibility in designing programs to meet their individual needs. The present Act attempts to control state and local programs with Federal dollars. The new Act should be based on the premise that the Federal participation is a partnership with the states to help enhance the basic state/local enterprise and make it more responsive to those areas related to National concerns. The Federal dollars should be targeted to areas where state and local resources are inadequate or unavailable to do the job.

There is an important Federal role, (a) in making programs available to special populations and eliminating sex stereotyping; (b) in the area of program improvement and expansion; (c) in providing assistance to urban and depressed rural areas; and (d) in increasing cooperation between business, labor, and education. The emphasis should be on incentives and innovative approaches to accomplish these goals.

Funds needed to keep vocational education current with rapidly changing technology and job requirements will be hard to find at the state and local levels, as school boards and administrators grapple with shrinking resources. State and local jurisdictions face the same inflationary pressures as does the Federal Government, and they are increasingly unable to provide more than the basic costs of maintaining existing, on-going programs in vocational education. Experience has demonstrated that the extra costs involved in development of programs in new and emerging occupations, curriculum development and teacher training to keep pace with new technology, renovation and replacement of obsolete equipment and facilities, and special services required by students who most need job skills to become productive citizens, simply will not occur without Federal support. We believe that the Federal role should be more effectively shaped to meet these target needs.

The Federal role should be refocused on clearly defined priorities to achieve access and equity and program improvement. This would significantly reduce the scope of the present Act. Within these perimeters states would have the flexibility to determine the use of Federal funds. In the area of access/equity a state could allocate the Federal funds to the area or areas where it determined the need was greatest. After demonstrating progress, funds could be transferred to other target areas. On the program improvement side, states would have a wide range of options for improving program quality and services. These could include -- renovation of existing facilities for vocational education program use; upgrading of equipment; construction of new vocational-technical facilities where it can be demonstrated that new construction would cost less than renovation of available existing facilities; establishing new programs; guidance and counseling; curriculum development; and cooperative ventures with the private sector.

Although specific percentage set-asides for target groups in the basic state grant would be eliminated, the special funds for Indian vocational programs administered by the Secretary should be retained. Programs for eligible Indian tribes and organizations are a unique and historic Federal responsibility.

Within this context, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education believes that the reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act should concentrate on the following six areas:

1. Areas of High Unemployment: A major National priority should be the channeling of vocational training and retraining funds to areas with high rates of unemployment, such as urban centers with large concentrations of unemployed, disadvantaged youth; localities where industry has cut production or moved out resulting in large numbers of displaced workers; and border areas experiencing large influxes of aliens. A rising tide of productivity will bring with it a

rising tide of frustrated expectations if young people and unemployed adults do not have the skills needed to qualify for the jobs which will be created through economic revitalization. Business and industry will face increased worker shortages if vocational training programs are not kept up-to-date with the latest technological advances.

2. Emerging Occupations: As the Nation gears up to increase productivity, it must direct attention to emerging occupations in critical, high demand areas. Fast changing technology requires that there be a workforce trained to operate and repair complex and sophisticated new machinery which will require skills and functions unheard of a few years ago. In vocational education, the new technology has an impact on program relevancy, equipment and facility renewal, curriculum development, guidance and counseling services, and teacher training and upgrading. The needs in these areas go far beyond the ability of most individual states or localities to respond effectively in upgrading their programs without Federal assistance.

   Vocational education will have an increased role in preparing workers for new occupations in high technology areas. A whole new cadre of technicians and semi-professional workers must be trained for the future. In an expanded service economy there is a whole range of new "white collar" occupations for which vocational education can provide training. These jobs, in areas such as banking, word processing, and a new generation of data processing technology, are a departure from the traditional perception of vocational education as blue collar. One of the greatest challenges facing vocational education is to expand its capacity to prepare these new white collar workers.

   Many of these new occupations will require a relatively high degree of proficiency in the basic skills of reading, writing, computation, and communication, in addition to specific technical skills. Where instruction is unavailable through referral to other programs, vocational education funds should be used to upgrade proficiency in basic skills within the context of the associated vocational or technical programs pursued by the students needing such services. Innovative programs which eliminate the artificial barriers between academic and vocational programs should be encouraged.

3. Economic Development and Training: Another area of critical importance as the Federal Government pursues its goals of economic revitalization is in the redevelopment of depressed areas and communities. Innovative ways must be found to link vocational education with other programs designed to bring new jobs to rural areas, to

provide for expansion of job opportunities to residents of inner cities, and provide retraining and job development for displaced workers in communities which experience major job displacement.

4. Handicapped: Vocational education for the handicapped should be continued as a National priority. Presently, handicapped students make up only 2.6 percent of vocational education enrollments. The often expensive special services needed to provide vocational education for the handicapped will, in most places, not be available if the commitment and the leadership does not come from the Federal Government. It is the responsibility of vocational education to sensitize policy makers, employers, and the general public to the career training needs of the handicapped. We must change the perception of low expectations for handicapped persons in employment, and stop career stereotyping regarding the occupational possibilities of certain disability categories, and of handicapped people in general.

5. Defense Needs: In the military, as in industry, we must have highly skilled workers who are capable of learning the operation of advanced machinery and systems. There is no longer room in the Armed Forces for the unschooled and the unskilled. The Armed Services face critical shortages of personnel who can qualify for training on highly technical advanced weaponry systems. Up-to-date vocational education programs of high quality can provide candidates for advanced training who are well grounded in basic technological skills. These needs should be kept clearly in mind as the Federal role in vocational education is discussed.

6. Corrections: The Council strongly endorses the call by Chief Justice Warren Burger for mandatory basic education and vocational training for prison inmates, in order that they will be equipped to compete for jobs and be contributing members upon their return to society. The cost to the states for incarceration is a staggering $4 billion a year. A modest investment in skill training will more than pay for itself if it helps former inmates qualify for jobs. The NACVE regional hearings on correctional education heard repeatedly that one of the major factors which caused former inmates to return to prison was the lack of a meaningful job. The NACVE report based on those hearings, Vocational Education in Correctional Institutions, is now available.

The Council would support separate legislation addressed to the special needs of persons in correctional institutions. If separate legislation is not feasible at this time, the Council believes that the reauthorized Vocational Education Act should strengthen its emphasis on programs for inmates and make them a major priority.

The same emphasis should be included in other education programs, such as adult education, and other relevant social service programs. Whether funded through new, separate legislation or through the Vocational Education Act and related statutes, any prison education program must take a comprehensive approach in order to meet the unique problems of inmates, including basic remedial education, skill training, counseling and guidance, attitude and motivation, psychological counseling, job placement, and transition to the free society.

In all of these areas, it is essential that program planners have adequate data and information on job needs and changing job requirements in order to avoid a mismatch between vocational programs and the job market. It is also important to continue practical research and dissemination in the areas of curricula for new occupations and teacher training and upgrading. The Council therefore urges the continuation of National and State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees, and of a National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With respect to the administration and funding of the Vocational Education Act, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education makes the following recommendations:

1. The formula for distribution of Federal funds under the new Act should be designed to overcome some of the past inequities to urban and rural areas. The present formula attempts to weight the distribution to achieve an equitable balance, but too often states have ignored those factors. The new formula should direct funds to where the most students are concentrated, while at the same time making provision for the special needs of sparsely populated rural areas which would not attract adequate funds on the basis of student population alone.

   Because of the critical financial problems facing most of our urban school districts, we urge that a separate allocation, apart from the regular formula, be made available directly to major city school districts for program improvement purposes and innovative methods of serving disadvantaged students. In addressing the needs of urban areas, it is essential that collaborative efforts between vocational education, other employment and training programs, and the private sector be expanded. Prime sponsor programs, community-based organizations, special programs such as 70,001, apprenticeship programs, and others, should be linked with existing vocational education resources in expanded, mutually supportive, arrangements.

Reauthorized CETA legislation should place greater emphasis on training, and a portion of those funds should be directed to urban vocational schools to assist them in improving their programs and expanding their capacity to serve disadvantaged in-school youth, and to extend programs to out-of-school youth in collaboration with other organizations in the community.

2. The Act should provide incentive funds to encourage these innovative linkages with other education and training programs. Vocational education must shed some of its traditional ways and move into the community through new cooperative ventures with business, labor, and other programs. Part-time employment, on-site training, entrepreneurial activities, evening and weekend training activities, and apprenticeship should be part of the program improvement thrust of the new Act.

3. The apprenticeship system has been an integral component of job training in America, past and present, and should be expanded. Apprentices attain their goals of employability and employment through a blend of practical "hands-on" types of experiences, together with related classroom instruction. Vocational education has and should continue to play a major role in the provision of this related instruction and in the promotion of apprenticeship programs.

4. Keeping vocational education classes supplied with up-to-date equipment, especially with rapidly changing advances in technology and machinery, is one of the most costly aspects of the program. NACVE testified on this need during the last reauthorization hearings, and Congress included in the Act special emergency funding for the modernization of equipment and facilities. However, funds have never been appropriated under that section. We urge that the new Act include such funding as a major purpose of the program improvement thrust, rather than as a separate authorization. A funding model which should be explored is the National Science Foundation's Undergraduate Scientific Improvement Program. Under this program, institutions may submit proposals for half the cost of new or replacement equipment, when such equipment will result in significant improvement to program quality.

5. We also recommend that incentive funds be made available to schools to find innovative ways to equip their programs, other than outright purchase. In certain programs, such as advanced medical technology, the initial purchase of even one piece of new equipment would be prohibitively expensive. Other alternatives could include sharing of equipment with other schools and laboratories, arrangements with business and industry for on-site supervised use of equipment during slack hours, agreements for observation and simulation at hospitals and other local facilities, and the loan of equipment by business. Tax incentives to business and industry to make such

loans or donations should be explored.

6. Postsecondary institutions have played an increasingly important role over the past decade in vocational education, far beyond that represented by the 15 percent set-aside in present law. The Council believes that this expanded role must be recognized. Many four-year institutions, as well as community colleges and technical institutes, are offering certificate, associate degree, and in some cases, baccalaureate programs. The Council questions whether the outright prohibition in the current Act against funding baccalaureate degree programs should be continued.

   Congress should give consideration to a limited demonstration program to permit the expansion of vocational programs to the third and fourth years of college. This should be restricted to certain high technology occupations where additional training is required to qualify for jobs at less than professional levels.

   Incentive bonuses should be provided where there is strong articulation between the secondary and postsecondary institutions, so that students could move in a logical progression from secondary vocational programs to more advanced postsecondary technical programs, and where arrangements permit the sharing of facilities.

7. It has been almost axiomatic that Federal funds under the Act go to a sole state agency. This principle should be reviewed and other options explored. In a State where there is one educational agency governing all educational levels, the sole state agency or board concept may be valid. In other States, with differing and often competing State Boards, other approaches may be warranted. The purpose of the sole state agency concept, or any alternative, should be to assure that vocational education is part of a comprehensive system, with articulation between academic and vocational programs, at the secondary, adult, and postsecondary levels, as well as with employment and training programs.

8. The State Plan under the present Act, despite attempted improvements, still remains primarily a compliance document drafted to satisfy the Federal requirements for funding. This has been encouraged by the Department of Education's strong emphasis on compliance. We believe that the use of state and local funds should not be subject to Federal planning requirements. The State Plan should be eliminated and replaced by a more simple method of accountability, which would permit the Department to ascertain that Federal funds were being used for targeted purposes. The emphasis on planning should remain at the local level, where the bulk of the funds are generated. The role of the U.S. Department of Education should shift from compliance review to providing leadership, technical assistance, and information dissemination on innovative programs and approaches.

9. Federal funds should not be used to maintain basic on-going programs. They should be used for those targeted activities for which state or local funds are not available. The Federal dollars should be incentive money to improve program quality, expand participation, and fund innovative activities.

10. The new Act should not require matching based on the concept contained in the present Act. The one-to-one match was intended to stimulate state and local spending. It has more than succeeded. State and local funds should now be used to support the basic enterprise which has been built. The Federal dollars should be used for the improvement and expansion of the basic program. However, since the Federal dollars are intended for improvement and enhancement, the state/local support for the basic program should not fall below the level of the Federal support. If the state/local portion should shrink to less than the Federal contribution, the Federal funds should be reduced to a level where the improvement funds do not exceed the basic support funds.

11. With the likelihood of worker shortages in the future, it is in the National interest to make a concerted effort to break down the artificial barriers which delineate the sex role designations of many occupational classifications. Sex equity and the elimination of sex role stereotyping should receive continued emphasis. The Council's recent report, Increasing Sex Equity, has been sent to the President and to Congress. It indicates that, while there has been some modest progress under the 1976 Amendments, sex equity and equity in other areas will not be achieved over night. If the scope of the Act is narrowed to target on access and equity concerns, along with program improvement, additional funds should be available to states for innovative approaches to achieve sex equity.

12. With increased attention to program improvement to make vocational education responsive to productivity concerns, we believe it is essential to maintain a strong, representative lay advisory council system at the local, state, and National levels. Advisory councils play a unique role in vocational education, especially in fostering the business/labor/education linkage. Business, particularly small business, and labor representation must be expanded. We believe the need for lay advisory councils will become even more important in the future as jobs and training become more technologically sophisticated. We must have the advice and the input of those with a vested interest in quality training and a skilled workforce. Councils should not be made optional, at the discretion of education administrators. Generally, education administrators have not opted for reaching outside of their establishment and forging working and effective linkages with business and labor. Those linkages are essential for achieving improved vocational programs in the future.

The ties bewteen the National, state, and local advisory councils should be strengthened to assure their independence, and to permit greater sharing of ideas and information. Too often, administrators have objected when advisory councils were not perceived as being advocates. By their nature and composition, advisory councils are advocates of excellence and quality in vocational education, but they are not uncritical advocates. They were never intended to be, and must never become, rubber stamps and advocates of the status quo. Advisory Councils are change agents in vocational education and should remain autonomous. These lay citizen councils are the bridge between the consumer and the delivery system. They offer an expertise and perspective, particularly through their business and labor membership, which vocational education must have to respond effectively to the challenges of the future.

IN SUMMARY

-- Reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act should be considered within the context of efforts to revitalize the Nation's economy, and Federal dollars should be focused on improving programs as an investment in human resources, in order to guarantee the skilled workforce of the future.

-- Vocational education touches directly on many vital National concerns; Federal dollars should be concentrated on Federal goals and priorities, with the emphasis on incentives and innovative approaches to accomplish those goals.

-- Administration and funding should remain under the Department of Education, or successor agency.

-- The scope of the Act should be narrowed to target on program improvement and expansion, and access/equity for all citizens.

-- Within this context, reauthorization should concentrate on six areas: (1) Areas of High Unemployment; (2) Emerging Occupations in High Demand areas; (3) Economic Development and Training; (4) Handicapped; (5) Defense Needs; (6) Correctional Education.

-- National and State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees and a National Center for Research in Vocational Education should be continued.

-- Federal requirements and regulations should be reduced to permit greater flexibility at state and local level in carrying out the purposes of the Act.

-- The formula for distribution of Federal funds should be designed to overcome past inequities to urban and rural areas.

-- A portion of CETA funds should be directed to urban vocational schools to assist them in improving programs for disadvantaged youth.

-- Incentive funds should encourage innovative linkages bewteen vocational education, other education and training programs, and the private sector.

-- Apprenticeship programs should be expanded, and vocational education should continue to play a major role in those programs.

-- Funding for replacement and modernization of equipment should be a program improvement priority, and incentives should be provided to find innovative ways to equip programs, other than outright purchase.

-- Funding of technical programs at the baccalaureate degree level should be considered, and incentives provided for increased articulation between secondary and postsecondary programs.

-- The sole state agency concept should be reviewed and other options explored.

-- The State Plan should be eliminated and replaced by a simpler accountability document.

-- Federal funds should not be used to maintain on-going programs.

-- Matching requirements of the present Act should be eliminated.

-- Sex equity should receive continued emphasis.

-- National, state, and local advisory councils should be mandated with expanded business and labor representation, and their independence strengthened.

October, 1981